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might have been his mother's if she were a man. In practice sororal nephews are rarely allowed to assert this right, and then only if their cognatic link with their maternal uncle's clan is not more than about four generations back.

Though the *pɔɣayabəlis* of a lineage or clan never act together as a single group, since marriage disperses them among other clans, they are often thought of as forming a united body, the feminine counterpart of the men of the clan. This is seen most conspicuously in funeral ceremonies; and we can easily understand why, if we remember that funeral ceremonies are the concern of the whole clan. We have made a passing reference to the role of *pɔɣayabəlis* in funeral ceremonies, but it deserves some amplification. For it is in funeral ceremonies that one constantly hears 'the *pɔɣayabəlis*' spoken of as if they were a regular, organized group, sees them called upon to undertake tasks in a purely representative capacity, and observes the allocation of prescribed portions of food to them as of right.

Naturally, this is most noticeable at the funeral of an important member of the lineage or the wife of a lineage elder. Large quantities of beer and food have to be prepared for distribution at various times during the ceremony, and this is the work of the women. All the women assisting in the work at the 'house of the funeral' (*koor yiri*) are divided into two groups, in a way which shows clearly the division of the women in whom a lineage or clan has jural and moral interests, into those who belong to the clan by birth and those who are married into it. The *pɔɣayabəlis* form one group. They have separate cooking quarters, and special tasks. The other group consists of the *dubɛnib*, 'those who stay in the room'. They are the clanswomen of the wives of the bereaved house, who are themselves wives of other members of the clan or of nearby linked lineages or allied clans. They may include the *pɔɣayabəlis* of several clans, except, of course, those of the clan celebrating the funeral. They, too, have their own cooking quarters and special duties and privileges. They are called *dubɛnib* (from *dug*, room, and *bɛ*, to stay or be) because they are identified with the *dugdɛm*, the 'mistresses of the rooms', that is, the wives of the bereaved clan who are their clan sisters. Their principal task is to remain indoors with their clan sisters in order to attend to their needs, to console them, and to help them in the duties that would fall upon wives in this situation. Clan sisterhood sometimes has a very wide connotation in these circumstances. There are many Wakii women married to Tongo men. If one of them requires the help of her clan sisters as *dubɛnib*, those of them who live nearest to her or are most closely related to her will be the first to come, and her distant clan sisters will probably not come at all. On the other hand, there are very few women of Hill Talis clans married to men at Duusi. So if one of them needs the help of *dubɛnib* she will call on all the women of Hill Talis clans at Duusi and in neighbouring settlements. In such a case the solidarity of clanship merges with that of locality and of common values. This principle is carried so far that if a Gɔre woman married to a Tɛnzugu man requires the help of *dubɛnib*, she calls upon all the other Gɔre wives, of whom there are very few, of Tɛnzugu and of immediately adjacent clans, whatever part of Gɔreland

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764 they may come from. For these women feel themselves to be as closely
571 akin to one another as members of the same clan, by contraposition with
562 the Tallensi whom they have married.

The *pɔyayabəlis* act together as a single group under the leadership of
764 the oldest among them at funeral ceremonies. The young girls perform
571 such tasks as bringing in the great bundles of firewood required for
562 cooking the beer. The older *pɔyayabəlis*, expert in the preparation of
●252 beer, undertake that task themselves. The younger women do the more strenuous jobs connected with cooking, such as grinding flour and preparing the other ingredients of a meal. The older women cook the porridge and meat relishes required for such rites as the setting out of consecrated food for the dead. All food required for ritual use is prepared by the *pɔyayabəlis*, since all the ritual is the preserve of the clan. As members of the clan they can be associated with the ritual activities of the clan, and as women they can carry out tasks which are appropriate to their sex in accordance with the usual division of labour. The *dubɛnib* do not prepare the food required for ritual purposes, but only the food used to give hospitality to clansmen, kinsmen, and other visitors.

764 The *pɔyayabəlis* have also to be directly represented by one of them,
571 most appropriately by one of the older women, in many of the rites.
562 A *pɔyayabəlɔg* has to assist in such rites as the offering of the initial sacrifices to the spirit of the departed and to the ancestors he or she is about
[212] to join. A *pɔyayabəlɔg* and a man of the clan see to the ritual feeding of the orphans, which takes place at different stages of the ceremonies. The various mourning strings (*miis*) which the orphans and widows have to wear during the funeral ceremonies are tied on, and at the end removed, by an elderly *pɔyayabəlɔg*. The setting out of consecrated food for the dead is always done by one male and one female member of the clan. And then, when the final divination takes place, a man and a woman of the lineage together carry out the simple rite of restoring the dead person's body dirt (*dayat*), the symbol of his individual self, to the house where his life was spent, and whither he now returns as a spirit to whom sacrifice must be offered.

×618 Lastly, a married *pɔyayabəlɔg* is a link between her paternal clan and
728 her husband's clan, both in herself and in the line of descent which
584 springs from her. This is evident nowadays from the role of the *pɔyasama* —a clansman of the bridegroom and a matrilateral kinsman of the bride's lineage—as an intermediary in marriage negotiations. It was shown in former days in peace-making ceremonies. If two clans, or groups of clans, had been at war, peace was concluded by a ritual reconciliation. In this the opponents were usually represented by a *pɔyayabəlɔg* of each side who was married to a member of the other side, who was therefore bound by jural and moral ties to both sides and had strong emotional attachments to both, and thus symbolized the underlying interdependence of the opponents.

613 Lineage and clan consist of both their male and their female members.
562 Though the women do not contribute to the continuity and perpetuation
602 of the lineage, they are a source of strength to it. This is most obvious in the fact that the bride-price paid for them adds to the resources by

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PLATE VIII

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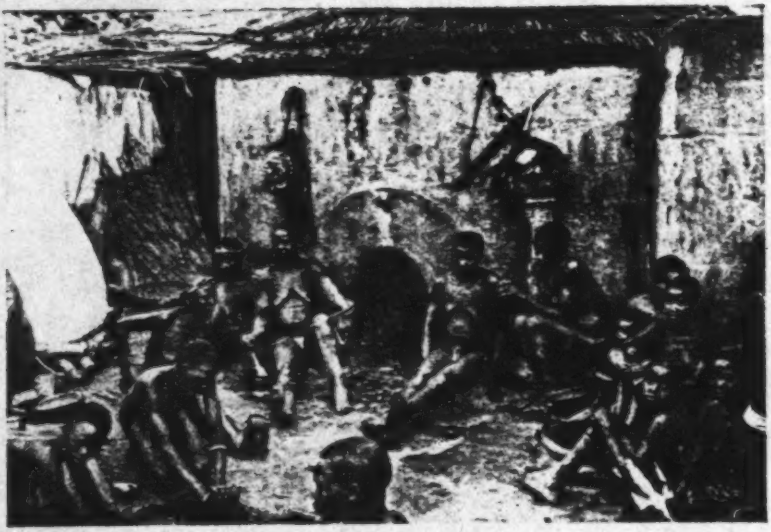

(*a*) The solidarity of clan sisters. During the funeral of the family head clan sisters of the widows, who have married into the same or adjacent clans, come to sit with them and console them.

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(*b*) One of the senior clan-sisters (*poyayabəlis*) of the deceased supervises the cooking of the beer for his funeral rites.

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or adolescent son. The *da'aŋ* and *da'aŋboog* also serve as a sort of drawing-room. A guest who must be treated with respect is invited to step round to the kitchen to have his meal there in private, a suitor is told to go round to the girl's mother's kitchen to plead his suit with her.

The *da'aŋ* and *da'aŋboog* are the counterpart in the social sphere of a woman of the *zɔŋ*, cattle yard (*sapak*), and granary (*buur*) in that of a man. They mark off the economic field reserved for her and the social sphere in which she is supreme. Etiquette and convention show this, and, as in the case of the *zɔŋ* and the *buur*, ritual notions give expression to it and put the seal of mystical value on it. Women do not have ancestor shrines of their own. But in her storeroom an old woman keeps her *zaaloŋ*. This is a long rope net, holding a neat pile of polished calabash dishes (*ŋman*) of all sizes which she has accumulated during her married life. One of these is her *kumpiog*, 'basket of death'. It is the symbol of her mortal existence.[1] When she dies it stands in her *dendɔŋo* and is eventually taken, with the most meticulous ceremonial care, to her eldest surviving daughter. In this room also she keeps her main storage pot (*dɔk*). It is to her what a man's granary is to him. One sign of this is the rule that her first-born daughter may never, in the mother's lifetime, open it. She does so ritually when her mother's funeral is completed.[2]

Lastly, there is the grinding-room (*neer*), a vastly important item in the organization of the domestic economy, and in the personal relations of the women of a family with one another. It is always a small, low room, 3 or 4 feet in diameter, with a doorway barely large enough to admit a person on hands and knees. A hole under the eaves, the size of a soup plate, lets in a glimmer of light. A waist-high table built of mud, in the hollow surface of which two nether grindstones are embedded, takes up most of the interior. In a small homestead like Ɔndieso's one *neer* is enough, and his mother and wife share it, though the older woman seldom has occasion to use it as her daughter-in-law does most of the cooking for the family. If there are several women in a household, more than one grinding-room is needed. One reason for this is purely mechanical. Grinding the grain for the main meal, in the evening, takes at least an hour, in the period of plenty. The women and girls do this at any time of the day, but prefer to do it in the afternoon. Thus more than one woman may want to use the *neer* at the same time. But there is another reason as well. Co-wives are apt to squabble over the use of the grinding-room, especially if they do not get on harmoni-

[1] The calabash is the commonest domestic utensil and it symbolizes a woman in many contexts. For instance, when a man's wife bears a child he will send to tell her parents; and the messenger reports, with the euphemism the Tallensi always resort to on such occasions, that the woman has born 'a calabash' (*ŋman*) if it is a girl, or a 'staff' (*duor*) if it is a boy—the staff being a hunting-weapon carried by men.

[2] Cf. Ch. VIII below.

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than the others, all the women must be allocated more or less equal plots for this purpose. Each woman, with the help of her daughters or a daughter-in-law, collects and stores wild herbs and edible leaves, buys condiments and seasonings like salt, pepper, and locust bean balls, sometimes with the proceeds of her own petty trading in the markets, and collects shea nuts for the preparation of shea butter, the most important source of fat and the most prized emollient in the native cuisine, for the use of her own *dug*. If a man gives a penny or twopence to one wife for the purchase of seasonings, he must, either immediately or on subsequent market days, give some money to his other wives for this purpose. If he obtains some meat, he must either distribute it amongst all his wives or give all of it to his senior wife to use or preserve for the benefit of the whole family. Only a wife in childbed is entitled to have extra luxuries, which it is the duty of her husband to provide.

Though each woman cooks for herself with an eye to the feeding of her own children and her husband, in the first place, co-wives are obliged to share food prepared with grain from the common supply. In times of plenty, if all the wives of a man have cooked a meal, each woman dishes out a portion of porridge and the accompanying relish for her husband, a portion for herself and her child or children eating with her, and a smaller portion for each of her co-wives. The husband should taste all the dishes sent in to him by his wives, and should pass on to the older children who do not eat with their mothers the dishes he does not want for himself. In times of scarcity a man's wives may cook in rotation for the whole family. But if a woman has a private supply of grain, obtained by trade or from her own relatives, she is entitled to use it for feeding her own children and the husband only; she need not give anything to her co-wives or their children.

In the production and utilization of food-supplies, as this brief sketch shows, the common interests of the *yir* are distinctly paramount. Co-wives co-operate most harmoniously, both among themselves and with the other women of the household, in this sphere of family life. In the organization of productive labour and of the domestic economy, and in the conventions regulating mutual help in this sphere, the dependence on one another of all the members of a household for their sustenance is constantly emphasized. But the relative autonomy of the *dug* is never wholly submerged. The women do not pool the products of their individual labour and enterprise. They do not pool their utensils, and family quarrels sometimes arise because one woman or one woman's child has borrowed and damaged a utensil belonging to another. They keep their firewood supplies, the accumulation of which is one of their most arduous tasks, jealously separate; and they do the same with vegetables and seasonings. There is sometimes friction between co-wives over the use of the grinding-room. But it is significant of the balance usually maintained between the centrifugal tendencies of the *dug* and the

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The meat, already putrescent, is nevertheless enjoyed despite its stench. Fresh eggs, being potential chickens, are never eaten; but addled eggs are much appreciated by children, who bake them in ashes. Children also eat field and domestic mice, a species of toad, and harmless snakes, all of which they shoot with miniature bows and arrows in the later months of the dry season. These things are despised by adolescents and adults who, however, appreciate bigger rodents like moles and water voles. In short, meat supplies are a matter of chance, vary greatly with the season, as will be clearer later, and though much desired, form but a small part of the bulk of food consumed.

FATS AND SEASONINGS. Fats and seasonings have a very important place in Tale cookery, and, like vegetables, are the woman's responsibility. But they are mainly market commodities and a man will frequently give his wife money to purchase them. The only fat used is shea butter (*kpaam*). It is obtainable all the year round. It is made of the nuts of the shea fruit (*kpi*) which are carefully preserved after the fruits have been eaten.

Dawa-dawa seed balls (*kpɔlug*) are made by boiling the seeds of the dawa-dawa fruits. The balls are sold at prices varying from a tenth of a penny for one the size of a large marble to threepence for one the size of a cricket ball.

The laborious processes of manufacture involved prevent many women from making their own shea-butter and dawa-dawa seed balls. Others, who can command the assistance, e.g. of daughters, often prepare enough to have a surplus for sale.

Red pepper (*nanzuuh*) is grown in small quantities by a few men for sale in the market, and much is imported. It is sold at about a halfpenny for a handful.

Rock salt (*yaarem*) is sold in the market by regular traders who fetch it from the south, a small heap (about ¼lb.) for a halfpenny.

Ziem, the ash of valley grasses, and *bakaa*, the ash of early millet stalks, are prepared by the women and are stored in large baskets or calabashes for their own use and for sale. They are used as salt substitutes.

THE PRODUCTIVE CYCLE AND THE FOOD CYCLE. We have seen how the domestic organization of the Tallensi works in relation to the supply of grain and the other main raw materials of their diet. We

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deal with the conversion of these raw materials into cooked food for the maintenance of all by the almost exclusive efforts of the woman.

The preparation of food is a woman's task. Though cooking is done by both sexes, men cook only on ritual and special occasions and, as a rule, out of doors. Women always cook in the kitchen, as it is a taboo to prepare food for everyday consumption outside the compound. As we have already mentioned, every woman other than a young wife has her own quarters (*dug*) consisting of several rooms. Of these, the most important for the present paper are the grinding room (*neer*) and the kitchens (*da'ay*). Not every woman possesses her own grinding-room, but she may use that of any other woman in her husband's compound, or of a related neighbouring compound, and no one may refuse her. The owner's permission is never asked, but a woman will not enter a grinding-room if she observes another's grain lying on the grinding-platform.

The grinding-room is the source of much friction within the compound. It is the cause or pretext of women's quarrels which often involve their husbands as well. Disputes arise mainly over the question of priority, or about the misuse of the grinding stones, e.g. leaving the *baarig* soiled with soup ingredients. Hence, a man will try to build a grinding-room for each wife in order to maintain the peace.

Inside the grinding-room is a low, semicircular platform (*neer*) the surface of which has two or three shallow depressions with their appropriate grindstones (*neekay*). These vary in weight, shape, and texture according to the purpose for which they are intended. There is a heavy and rough grindstone—*ŋmaarig*—used for crushing the whole grain; a smaller and flatter one—*baarig*—which crushes the rough corn into fine flour (*zɔm*); and a small, round stone—*ziba'axneer* —used only for grinding soup ingredients such as dried vegetables, red pepper, rock-salt, dawa-dawa-seed balls, dried meat, &c. If a grinding-room lacks the latter stone the soup ingredients are mixed with a little flour and ground with the *baarig*. The flour is added so that the stone should be left clean and dry.

The kitchen consists of two adjoining rooms, a covered one (*da'ambɔk*) used during the wet season, which serves also as the store-room for the owner's produce, her firewood, and cooking-pots, and an open one (*da'ay*) used during the dry season. However, it happens

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312 natives regard this water as unsuitable for their own consumption, but use it as drinking-water for fowls, for building purposes, and to wash in. There are no special rights of use attached to water-holes, but as a rule each water-hole serves a group of compounds within a radius of not more than 300 yards.

267 A proper meal, according to Tale values, must consist of cooked food; and two meals a day are considered to be necessary for the satisfaction of ordinary needs. When the granaries are full and the women are given grain liberally this standard can be reached, but not in the lean months.

596 The owner of the granary distributes grain periodically to all his
261 wives and those of the householders dependent upon him. He never
264 descends into the granary himself, but appoints a young man, preferably unmarried, to do so, lest the women complain of favouritism. Each woman receives the same measure regardless of her status or of the size of her family. Absolute equality is stressed. Even a young wife without a kitchen receives an equal share. The measure, a small basket or calabash, remains the same throughout the seasons, but the period for which the housewife must make it last varies. When grain is plentiful they receive the measure daily. They will cook food at noon and at sunset, and some will make enough to suffice for the next morning's breakfast. In times of scarcity the same amount of grain has to last two or three days. It is left now to the individual household and family to supplement its food resources as best it can. If a noon meal is cooked at this time, it is made of grain obtained from the ancillary sources we have previously described. Every woman carefully considers her supply, limiting the number of meals so that the family may be assured of the evening meal as regularly as possible.

562 However, shortage of food is not alone responsible for the uncer-
264 tainty of meals. Woman is the pivot of the whole domestic life. She
252 carries on her duties throughout pregnancy till the moment of labour approaches, and again as soon as her period of confinement is over (three or four days). But she is also absolute mistress of her home, and when she refuses to cook her husband cannot compel her to. Nevertheless, a woman will miss cooking a meal only for very good reasons, e.g. when she has been working in the fields late, sowing or harvesting, or beating the floors of the compound, or has been away

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1. Bringing home firewood: Mother and daughter

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2. A woman in her kitchen (posed)

[facing p. 264]

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for firewood. A woman with a small child never omits to cook a little for it, whatever the circumstances. The cooking routine also becomes upset under the stress of seasonal activities. When a whole family goes to work at a bush farm or to a fishing expedition, some groundnuts or dry guinea-corn is taken along to chew, and no cooking will be done until evening.

Each woman is responsible for the provision of meals for her husband and family. In certain situations co-wives co-operate for the common good. Thus when building operations take place, or a man has hired or 'invited' labour the co-wives cook in turn to provide food for the men. On such occasions the owner of the granary allots a special share of grain for the labourers' porridge to the woman whose turn it is to cook for them.

Mutual assistance between co-wives occurs only when a woman is confined or ill. Then her co-wife (a wife of her husband or his brother) cooks for her and her family. The confined woman provides her own produce and firewood and the cooking is done in her kitchen. This is the duty and prerogative of co-wives. Only as a last resort would the husband's mother or sister cook for her in those circumstances. When a young wife shares her mother-in-law's quarters she does all the household tasks; but when she shares those of a senior wife, they assist each other and cook in turn.

The standard meal of the Tallensi is *sayub ni ziet*, meal porridge and soup. Porridge is prepared of flour and, depending upon the season and what a man has in his grain-store, it is made of early millet, guinea-corn or late millet. Sometimes also maize (generally purchased) or cow-peas or rice is used. When root crops are in season they are cooked instead of porridge, but not because porridge becomes monotonous to the Tallensi, or they wish to vary the diet (see Appendix), it is done in order to make the grain last longer. 'Porridge is food, it makes you strong', and there can never be too much of it is the Tale point of view. 'But if you eat too much of the other things they spoil your belly'.[1]

The preparation of porridge is very simple. Flour is not preserved

[1] A Tale friend enquired what kind of food he would be given in our country, and when told that he would eat meat, fish, bread, and eggs, he exclaimed, 'What, no porridge? I call that starvation.'

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from day to day, but is usually ground fresh whenever required. When her flour is ready, the woman puts some water on to boil in the porridge pot (*sayarok*). Sitting on the flat stone in front of the fireplace she then mixes some flour with cold water, stirring it to a thin paste with her hand, in an old calabash kept for this purpose. When the water boils she pours the paste in, stirring all the while with the stirring-stick. It is left to boil for a few minutes until it thickens and assumes a gluey appearance. With a ladle she pours off about a third of the contents into the old calabash, and puts it aside. She sprinkles a few handfuls of flour into the porridge in the pot, stirring it swiftly with her stick until it becomes quite thick. Every now and again she dips her hand into cold water and with a brisk movement sweeps the porridge adhering to the stick into the pot. The half-cooked contents of the calabash is then added to the porridge and stirred again. When it is thick enough for the stick to stand in it the porridge is ready. The time taken to cook a potful of porridge sufficient for 10 people is only about 10 minutes. The same technique is employed by all the women; the only difference introduced in cooking large quantities is the mixing of the flour with warm water instead of cold.

Porridge is never eaten by itself, but is always accompanied by soup, the main variant in Tale diet. This is made chiefly of fresh or dried vegetables, cultivated or found wild, and there is never a shortage of these. When reduced to its last resources a family subsists almost entirely on soup.

The natives classify soups into two types: *zisaalog* and *zizaayog*—'slippery' soup and 'coarse' soup. The first is smooth and viscous: 'It slides down as soon as you put it into your mouth, before the porridge.' Ocro soup is the most representative of this kind. The coarse variety is made of crushed ground-nuts, marrow leaves, hibiscus or similar vegetables. 'It sticks in your mouth after the porridge and you have to swallow it down.'

Porridge is the substance, soup is the relish. A woman tries to vary the latter 'so that they do not tire of eating the same'; when a visitor from afar comes she prepares the most tasty soup she knows, and if she wishes to please her husband she observes which soup he prefers and cooks it frequently for him. Seasonal factors, however, count for much, and women cook mainly what is most easily obtainable at

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the time. From a series of menus which we collected over a period of two months (November–January), it would appear that ocro is the favourite soup, while *bet* (*hibiscus sabdariffa*) is the least liked. *Neri*-seed[1] soup is rarely cooked for ordinary consumption, but is prepared on a special occasion such as a visit of an in-law relation.

Though the number of different vegetables planted is few, the women are able to achieve a considerable range of variation by using every part of the plant and by combining them in different ways. Every woman has a well-stocked larder of dried vegetable-leaves and fruits which she keeps in pots (e.g. ocro) or onion-shaped receptacles made of dried guinea-corn leaves (*kiykarog*) and suspended from the rafters to keep them dry (e.g. *bet* or *nayyena*).

The process of preparation is the same in the main for most soups, and is described in the Appendix. Vegetables and other ingredients are never washed or cleaned before use: Tale women are very casual in their cooking hygiene; the cooking-pots are left unwashed from one meal till the next and the soup dishes always have stale food adhering to them.[2]

Meat is a very important ingredient in the soup. It is most commonly consumed in this way, though it is sometimes eaten by itself by men after sacrifices. It is a great delicacy and men will often spend long hours at a ceremony in order to obtain a morsel of meat or a tiny piece of the viscera. Any scrap of meat or fat which falls to the ground is picked up and swallowed raw. But meat is not 'food', they say, as porridge is, it is *valeg*, i.e. gluttony. While a little of it is strengthening, too much causes diarrhoea.

The only meat directly killed for cooking is the guinea-fowl. The

[1] *Neri* (*cucumis melo*) when ripe is buried and covered with guinea-corn stalks and allowed to rot. The seeds are then extracted, dried, and stored for making soups.

[2] The chief reason would seem to be the scarcity of water at certain times of the year, and the labour involved in carrying it, as well as the ingrained indifference of the Tallensi to cleanliness. Yet they take great pleasure in polishing their calabashes at the water-holes to make them yellow and shiny, and treat the new calabashes in a special way to attain the gloss. We have seen women carrying gravel home with them when visiting a neighbouring settlement some 4 miles away because their own clayey soil was not satisfactory for cleaning calabashes. We could not obtain an adequate explanation of this attitude from the women themselves, beyond that 'they like it so'.

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initiative in this matter is never taken by the woman herself. If she has no meat she cooks without it, but the husband, tasting the soup, will observe that her meat is finished and will catch a guinea-fowl for her or give her money to buy one at the market. A woman may not catch one of her husband's guinea-fowls herself or she would be branded a thief, but she could catch one of her own, if she has any. This is the reason why she tells her husband 'So-and-so gave me a guinea-fowl and I had it killed to-day', if she slaughters one she received as a gift. A woman never kills or plucks a guinea-fowl herself because it is unbecoming. She will ask a young boy in the compound to do it for her. We have frequently observed women carrying home live guinea-fowls already plucked for them in the market by some man, so as to avoid delay in the cooking. The freshly killed guinea-fowl is hung up directly over the fireplace where it becomes gradually dried. When it is used the first day it is called *num-mahar*, i.e. fresh meat; after two or three days it is dry on the surface but still soft inside and is known as *num-gahar* or *num-zora*, i.e. smoked meat; after three days it is dry all through. It is now *num-kpee*, dried meat. There is no preference shown for meat at any particular stage; the Tallensi are an economical people and have a matter-of-fact attitude in this regard. Meat is added to the soup in very small quantities. Used fresh or smoked, it is added as a whole portion, e.g. the head, the neck, a wing, a leg or the breast. Dried meat is ground and stirred into the soup in the same way as the other seasonings. A medium sized guinea-fowl thus lasts a family of seven about a week. Dried meat can be kept any length of time, and if a piece of fresh meat is obtained in the meantime it is used up first. In such a case one guinea-fowl might last a housewife as much as a fortnight.

Beef or donkey-meat is much appreciated. We have seen a woman produce about two square inches of dried beef which was a year old. Such meat is carefully preserved in a pot or calabash among a woman's more valued possessions; but dried guinea-fowl is kept with her other soup ingredients in the kitchen.

Fish is used in the same way as meat, though less frequently, and mainly in dried form. This is due to the fact that it is seasonal and has generally to be purchased. But it is appreciated as much as meat.

Vegetables are the foundation of every soup; meat and fish make

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a good soup; but no soup is complete without seasonings (*zikuot*). Red pepper (*nanzuuh*), the most important, is never omitted from any soup, is added to other dishes too, and even to native beer to give it more punch. Salt (*yaarem*), though very highly valued, is not as indispensable as red pepper. *Ziem* (the ash of valley grasses) or *bakaa* (the ash of early millet stalks) is sometimes substituted for salt or used in addition to it. A much-favoured seasoning is the dawa-dawa seed ball (*kpalug*) which is sometimes even used as the foundation of a soup. Usually the seasoning ingredients are all used together; the more pungent the soup the better it is liked. Most women do not keep large supplies of seasonings, but consider it worth while to walk several miles to the nearest market to buy them.

Thus, though the native considers soup merely as a relish for his porridge, it really provides the vegetable and animal food (the latter in very small quantities) which balances a purely cereal diet.

The soup is always put on to cook first. While it is boiling, the woman sweeps out the close (*dendɔŋo*) where the meal is to be eaten, and prepares the vessels for serving it. The preparation and cooking of the soup takes 30–40 minutes. When it is ready she makes the porridge. In all these tasks a woman is assisted by her young daughters. Small boys, too, sometimes give a hand with the fire, but never with the cooking.

As soon as the porridge is ready it is dished up in several calabashes. The housewife takes much trouble in arranging her husband's portion in neat slices—she is less fastidious about the other portions. Each portion of porridge is rubbed over with shea butter; that of the husband's very liberally. This is the most common way in which fat is consumed. After the porridge has been shared out the soup is poured into an equal number of dishes, or sometimes over the porridge. The actual cooking and serving of food, unlike the fetching of wood and water, does not absorb a great deal of the housewife's time. One hour is sufficient to prepare a meal for ten people.

The amount of food consumed per meal differs according to the seasons. When food is scarce, whatever quantity of grain a woman has she will cook, and it will have to suffice; but a Talena never feels satisfied unless he has had about 1½ lb. of porridge at a sitting.

There is no specially appointed eating-place in the compound.

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Each family eats in its own close, while the man usually eats in that of his senior wife, and his other wives each send him in a dish of food.

As we have already mentioned, each woman in a polygynous household cooks for the husband and her own family. Their cooking is not synchronized, but as the evening meal is always made at sunset, there is no considerable discrepancy in the time of eating by the different families.

The man eats with his 'youngest' child, that is, the last one to have stopped suckling. If he has unmarried brothers dependent upon him they, too, eat with him. A few yards further off his sons—young men and boys—form another group, while the woman herself and the young girls eat apart at the kitchen door. Two women sharing a kitchen eat together. Men and women do not eat together except in circumstances which will be noted later.

A calabash of porridge, a dish of soup, a calabash of drinking-water and another for washing the hands are set down for each group. When the senior member of each group has taken his place the others settle in a circle round the food. In order of seniority each one washes his or her right hand perfunctorily. The eldest member is the first to begin eating, but he is also the first to stop. The youngest member finishes last and is usually encouraged to clear the dish; for an older member to continue eating with the youngest is to invite the ridicule of the others. The food is eaten with the right hand. A piece of porridge is broken off and dipped into the soup with cupped fingers. If meat is present each member breaks off a tiny morsel of it to taste. During the meal the water is passed round for every one to drink. Though each group seated round a dish of food acts independently, those sitting in the same close with the head of the household do not begin before him. Eating is a serious business; there is no conversation at meal-times, and as soon as a group has finished they disperse.

In addition to sending in food to her husband, a woman sends a dish of porridge with soup to her husband's mother, and a dish to each of her co-wives belonging to her own food economy unit. Thus, each woman has to cook enough for her husband and family and to exchange with every kitchen supplied from the same grain store. This rule, naturally, does not hold for food provided by a woman's

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We have been unable to explore the economic context of food in Tale society (e.g. as exhibited in the market); or to discuss the emotional values associated with it; or to describe its functions as a technique for expressing, defining, and imposing social obligations. These problems must be left for consideration at a future date.

M. and S. L. FORTES.

APPENDIX

We give below a few examples of soups and their method of preparation; a brief description of foods used as substitutes for porridge; of occasional foods which are obtained mainly in the market; and of the preparation of shea-butter.

Soups (ziet)

Zitaalog—smooth, viscous soup; best example of this is *ma'ana ziet*—ocro soup.

A small handful of ground, dried fish or meat is thrown into a potful of boiling water. A handful of red peppers, a few lumps of salt and a piece of dawa-dawa-seed ball, ground up together and mixed into a paste with a little water is added next. The seasonings are made into a paste so that the pepper should not float on the surface. While this is cooking the ocros are prepared. They are used either fresh or dried; but frequently the two varieties are mixed in equal proportions. They are crushed into a pulp on the grind-stone and added to the boiling soup. The contents are stirred with the stirring-stick (*vugr*) every now and again. The soup takes about 30 minutes to cook.

In soups of this type the vegetables used are always crushed to a pulp or cut up very fine. Other viscous soups are made from the leaf of the local elm (*nuom*) and from a common weed (*taalem*), but mainly by the addition of ocro to other vegetables, as, e.g., *vaat ni ma'anar*—leaves and ocro—where the leaves of the ocro or vegetable marrow or baobab tree are used; or *bermihim*, a soup made of the white hibiscus flower with the addition of ocros.

Zizaayog—coarse soup. To this group belong all the soups made of the hibiscus and other leaves, and also soups made of ground-nuts and cow-peas. The leaves are sliced and thrown into boiling water. While they are cooking, a small calabashful of ground-nuts is crushed fine, also a handful of peppers, a piece of dawa-dawa-seed ball and a few lumps of salt. These are all mixed together and stirred into the boiling vegetables. If there is meat or fish it is also ground and added at this stage. This soup takes 30 minutes to cook. The thickening, which is always added to this kind of soup, may be made of coarsely ground grain, or of cow-pea flour.

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The Tale women show great ingenuity in the number of appellations they give to soups of this group, which often do not differ from each other in the main ingredients.

Cooked Foods Eaten as Porridge Substitutes

1. *Tubers*:

Frafra potatoes (*peeka*) boiled in the skins and eaten plain. This is called *peefita*.

Cooked without the skins and eaten with soup. The potatoes are put on the ground and trodden with the feet in a circular movement. This removes the skins. They are then washed and put to boil. The water in which they have been cooked is not utilized.

Yam (*guya*) boiled in plain water. Is served in small chunks and eaten with soup.

Sweet potatoes (*gumkma'ala*) boiled and eaten plain. Sometimes cooked together with frafra potatoes.

2. *Legumes*:

These are boiled in plain water and are eaten with shea-butter and a seasoning of pepper and salt.

3. *Rice*:

Boiled with pepper and salt. Shea-butter is added to it when dished up. Is eaten with soup.

Ground cow-peas or ground rice is occasionally made into porridge.

Occasional Foods

Kamcha—fried dumplings made of cow-pea flour. The process of preparing the cow-pea flour (*tia zom*) is rather laborious.

The cow-peas are crushed and washed in several changes of water in order to remove the skin which, if left, would make the flour black. It is then spread out in the sun to dry and later ground to flour. The flour is made into a thick batter to which salt is added. The batter is dropped into boiling shea-butter, handful by handful, and fried a golden brown. This is a much appreciated food and is only cooked for the market. So also is *maasa*—fried cakes made of millet or maize flour. These are much larger than the *kamcha* and are fried in the same way.

Gaar—steamed cakes made of cow-pea flour, bean flour, or ground rice. The flour is prepared as for *kamcha*. Instead of salt, an infusion of *bakaa* (the ash of early millet stalks) is added to the water which is used for making a thick batter. A pot is half-filled with dry grass and a little water added. It is then put on to boil. Small portions of the batter are in the meantime placed in between broad folded leaves of the *bayana* tree, or, if larger cakes are

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252 262 desired, between two overlapping leaves. As soon as the water boils the cakes are arranged one on top of the other inside the pot, which is then closed tightly with a lid or calabash. The cakes are thus cooked by the steam, and are ready in 15 minutes. They are like baked porridge in appearance and are eaten with melted shea-butter spread over them and a sprinkling of salt and red pepper. *Guor* is principally cooked for market sale, but is occasionally cooked by the housewife to vary the menu.

Milk (*bihim*)

262 234 Milk is obtained only from cows and is eaten as curds (*bigbihir*) mixed with flour. Herdboys, however, when out on the pasture sometimes milk the cows for a drink.

Shea-Butter (*kpaam*)

252 262 There are five stages in the making of shea-butter:

1. The nuts of the shea fruit (*kpi*) are crushed with a stone to a brown pulp.
2. The pulp is placed in a large open pot (*sar*) over a fire, and stirred with a stick for a considerable time till it is a thick, sticky mass.
3. This is then ground quite fine. The grinding releases the oil.
4. It is now washed in several changes of water, being stirred continually with the hand, until the oil rises to the surface.
5. The oil is skimmed off the water, melted over a fire, and again skimmed till pure white oil is obtained. This is put into calabashes or small pots. [278] The dark oil-scum (*kpabut*) is kept for medicinal purposes. It is only used externally. The brown fibrous residue left after the washing process is made [372] into small balls and dried. This is *burum* and is used for making fires.

241 inches of soil. Because of the haphazard method of planting, great care has to be exercised not to damage the young plants. The work is tedious; and the grain stores at this season of the year are [461] at their lowest (9); seldom is a man prepared to work for more than two or three hours at a time, and the maximum area cultivated in a day is about $\frac{1}{16}$th acre. Hoeing is started near to the compound and works outward; by the time the bush farm is reached the crops there are almost choked with weeds, and commonly they receive a set-back in their early stages from which they never [471] recover. A farmer fortunate enough to have a good supply of grain may call his neighbours to assist with hoeing, in exchange [273] for food and "dam" (Nankani), the local guinea corn beer. Or farmers may take turn about to work on each others' farms. In a few cases labour is hired and paid money wages.

243 On land where early millet is planted it is usual to give three hoeings; two before harvesting early millet, and a final one to earth-up the late cereal afterwards. Land planted with a single cereal, guinea corn or late millet, is generally hoed only twice; or, in the case of some bush farms on the hills, once only.

Harvesting, Methods and Times.

241 Early millet is the first crop to be harvested, at the end of June or beginning of July, having occupied the ground for about 243 80 days. When mature, this crop is from 5 to 7 feet high; at this stage the interplanted late cereal is 3 to 4 feet high, and ground-crops are beginning to make a cover. It is common to pluck a few heads "green" for immediate consumption, but the grain is allowed to harden before the main harvest. During this period birds become a serious pest; children spend the day scaring them and women carry rattles, made from pieces of broken pottery threaded on to a thin stick.

The heads of millet are cut off at the neck by men using short knives, and women carry the crop in baskets to the compound to [242] dry. The best heads are selected for seed; second grade heads are stored, unthreshed, in a granary (see diagram by Muir and Williams (4)) and threshed as required for use. Poor heads—"konkoni" (Nankani)—are boiled, threshed, and stored in pots; this grain is used for thickening soups. When all the early millet ● 252 heads have been gathered, women pull up the remains of the plants and transport them to a flat rock, where they burn them slowly to obtain the ash, which is carefully collected in pots. The ash

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is used in preparing tobacco for chewing, and also, by percolation, "coom missom" (Nankani), literally "sour water", which is used in cooking cereal foods. The salts in the ash probably supply important minerals to the diet (11), but the process by which they are obtained, robs the soil of much of the manurial value in the residue of the early millet crop.

The leaves of cowpeas are picked by women throughout the growing season and used in making soup. Maize is harvested towards the end of July, followed by "neri". The fruits of neri are buried in the ground for about ten days to rot the pericarp; they are then dug up, washed by women in a stream, and the seeds are dried and stored in pots for future use. Early guinea corn is reaped at the end of August and in September, by which time late millet and the main guinea corn crop are coming into flower. At this season, women and children strip all the leaves and sepals from Hibiscus sabdariffa and, after careful drying, store them in pots for making soup during the dry season. The leaves of Hibiscus cannabinus are similarly treated, and the end of the branches, bearing fruits, are cut off and later the seeds are removed for soup making. The bast fibres of both Hibiscus sabdariffa and Hibiscus cannabinus are drawn after retting in streams for 10 to 12 days: they are made into rope of good quality; this work is generally performed by men. Women also draw the fibres of Hibiscus cannabinus, and scrub them white for making the "tails" they sometimes wear as alternative dress to leaves.

The main harvest season starts during the middle of September with groundnuts, and is carried on through October, and into early November, with guinea corn and late millet. During this period, from a peak in August, the rainfall decreases and the water-table falls; with the onset of the harmattan in November, the whole countryside dries rapidly. The groundnut plants are lifted with a hoe, and carried to the shade of a tree, where the nuts are picked off; the hay is carefully conserved as a dry season fodder. The day previous to reaping the late cereal, cowpeas are collected and carried to the compound; the leaves and stems are also conserved for fodder. The heads of late millet and guinea corn are cut off in the same way as those of early millet, and the stems are trampled to the ground. For about three weeks after harvesting, livestock are given open range in the farms and they feed readily upon the still succulent leaves of guinea corn and, to a less extent, millet. But as soon as the material is dry enough, fire is put through the farm to burn off the trash from the resistant cereal stalks, leaving them slightly charred, and clean: in this way much valuable dry season fodder is destroyed. The stalks are chopped from their